

December 18, 1968

Mr. Aaron Cohodes
Vice President
Instructional Dynamics Incorporated
166 East Superior Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Mr. Cohodes:

The promptness of my reply may help to suggest how deeply intrigued I was with your letter of December 13 - if you could see the rest of the pile it might be an even more impressive witness. This remark is not entirely tangential, since it reflects the only important reservation that I would have about participating in the program you suggest.

There are several aspects of the program that I would enjoy discussing with you in more intimate detail, and hope this letter may set the stage for it. Is there any possibility that you, or one of your representatives, might be in the Stanford area during the near future?

Let me take the occasion now for a few remarks. I think you are definitely onto one of the most important innovations in educational methodology. There is the limitation that there ought to be at least some visual material connected with presentations, particularly of scientific subjects, and ideally we would be speaking as if we were already in the era of the video record. I have been following this educational approach with deep interest for some time, as some of my enclosures will verify. I was also particularly interested to read very recently of the proposed collaboration between the New York Times and CBS for some experimental ventures. I would agree that the inclusion of video-pictorial material is somewhat diversionary from your immediate proposal, but I also will assume that you are not overlooking the future prospects of this expansion of your approach.

One of the main points I want to discuss with you would be the scope of the subject matter that you really want me to discuss. I would find a weekly discourse on current advances in molecular biology rather difficult to put over, except to an extremely specialized audience, and one that I doubt you have access to as yet. On the other hand, I have been interested for some time in communicating with a larger public about much broader issues of contemporary science, and this is reflected in the weekly column that I write for the Washington Post, which does receive some small additional syndication.

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I think it would be difficult for me to continue the column and to cooperate in your enterprise without securing some advantage of combining the efforts. I do not yet have a clear picture of what this might be, but I would think we might want to discuss this in some detail. I am sending a dozen and odd examples of my recent columns to give you an idea of the range of subjects that I have been discussing.

If I have underestimated the technical level of the audiences that you can in fact realistically hope to reach, we might well wish to modify this suggestion, although it occurs to me that this particular instructional technique might be better suited for a more general discussion of the human, political, and social impact of new discovery than for an elaboration of their technical content, for which I think there is no substitute for the written media of communication.

At any rate, I think we can well leave these matters for more detailed discussion, to which I would look forward.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

P.S. Why don't you send me a sample Cassette and playback unit so I can get some idea of how this actually works with one of your presently operating systems.